

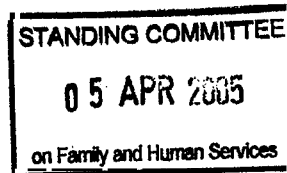
From: debra anstis [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 5 April 2005 2:43 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: House of Representatives - submission on issues related to International Adoption - Submission from Queensland adoptive parent

The House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Family

and Human Services

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Submission on issues related to International Adoption

Terms of reference:

1. Any inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions; and

2. Any inconsistencies between the benefits and entitlements provided to families with their own birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas

Dear committee members,

I am the mother of an internationally adopted child born in Thailand. He was placed in the care of the Thai Government Department of State Welfare before reaching his first birthday. The Thai Government Welfare system carries out a thorough search for an abandoned child's birthparents and extended family members with the goal of reuniting the child to the birth family before declaring a child available for adoption. Thailand has recently become a signatory to The Hague and is known for its ethical practices when dealing with its orphaned and abandoned children being adopted to Australia and other countries.

We adopted our son in 1999 at the age of two and a half years through the Queensland Department of Families international adoption program.

We are currently in the process (since December 2000) of adopting our second child from Thailand through the Queensland Department of Child

Protection, as this is the only system (government or non-government) that Queenslanders are able to adopt through.

During our first adoption process (1997 to 1999) we encountered several ***inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions requirements of the children to be adopted:***

1. Inconsistencies with application fees.
2. Inconsistencies with marital status and length of marriage requirements.
3. Inconsistencies dealing with the age requirements of the couples.
4. Inconsistencies dealing with the maximum age of child/ren.
5. Inconsistencies with the amount of time to process and forward files overseas.
6. Inconsistencies between the number of countries to adopt from.

During our second adoption process we encountered additional ***inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions requirements of the child to be adopted:***

7. Inconsistencies in specific program information on a country.

Example: The Victorian DHS publicly acknowledged that Thailand accepted files for s/n children (aged four/over and minor/surgical s/n) from Australians, whereas the Queensland Department of Families had no knowledge of this particular program. The Queensland Department eventually acknowledged the s/n program existed, but only after six months of negotiations with adoptive parents. **The adoption rights of Victorian families were respected, whereas Queensland families had to fight for the same rights when adopting from the same country.*

8. Inconsistencies with the adoption application process.

Example: Currently the list is closed to Queenslanders wishing to adopt a child. The list will reopen at an unspecified date and give applicants a window of a number of weeks to apply when the Department of Child Safety calls for "expressions of interest". **Queensland is the only state practicing a "closed list".*

During the past twelve years of our pursuit to form our family we have witnessed ***inconsistencies between the benefits and entitlements provided to families with their own birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas***

1. Inconsistencies in government funding for initial family formations.

Example: During IVF attempts to become a family we where subsidies by the government for each IVF cycle, the government paid us approx. \$1000 for each IVF cycle we completed. The government pays couples a maximum of six cycles totaling approx. \$6000 whether a family is formed or not. **The government generously funds IVF treatments with a very low success rate (approx. 20%) but refuses to fund and charges considerable fees for international adoption where the outcome of a family is (100%).*

2. Inconsistencies in Family Payments.

The Federal Government does not view families formed by adoption, especially international adoption, as "real" families as this is reflected in the policy of not paying new internationally adoptive families the \$3000, soon to be \$4000, baby bonus.

yours sincerely,

Deb Anstis

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